



## Businesses can be recognized as 'lake-friendly'

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At Lake Tahoe, clean water is everyone's business. All property owners, public and private, are required to participate in efforts to protect Lake Tahoe from contamination. While most homeowners know best management practices (BMPs) are required on their property, they might not know all business owners are required to implement them as well. A new "lake-friendly business recognition program" will help people learn which businesses follow clean water guidelines.

Precipitation and melting snow run off impervious surfaces of commercial and industrial properties that have large structures and parking lots. This water is called "stormwater runoff." It becomes polluted when it "washes" contaminants off the parking lot or work areas. If it flows into the storm drain or roadside ditch, it carries accumulated sediment, grease, oil and heavy metals directly to Lake Tahoe.

Into creeks, lake

Many people mistakenly think that storm drains lead to a treatment plant. At Lake Tahoe and many communities, however, storm drains lead to the nearest creek and into the lake.

For businesses to qualify for "lake-friendly" status they must take three basic actions to prevent pollution of Lake Tahoe. First, they must keep the business site clean. This involves good housekeeping practices, like sweeping parking and work areas instead of washing them with a hose, and cleaning litter and debris from drainage inlets (all sweepings and litter should be put in the trash). Businesses should store hazardous materials in covered areas and institute a spill prevention and response plan.

Second, businesses should reduce the amount of stormwater runoff by removing unneeded pavement and restoring the area for infiltration. They should also plant native vegetation on all disturbed bare soil areas.

Third, businesses should capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater onsite by installing a combination of practices such as drop inlets or grates, vegetated detention basins, and slotted channel drains on paved areas. They should direct runoff from large paved areas through oil absorption pillows and sand/oil separation units to underground water infiltration systems.

Sand/oil separators remove the worst of the pollutants in a device that is periodically cleaned out. The underground infiltration gallery stores the water in large chambers so that it can soak gradually into the soil.

In many parking lots, the runoff from the pavement can be conveyed to an attractive, landscaped dry-pond or detention basin where the water is stored. Plants in the basin can remove the nutrients (plant food) from the water. When the water soaks into the soil, most other pollutants are filtered out before they can reach the lake.

## Requesting information

Businesses that want to get started with the "Lake-Friendly" process should call the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) Erosion Control Team at (775) 588-4547, Ext. 202, or call toll free at 1-887-2DO-BMPS. They can also e-mail a request for a free BMP site evaluation to [www.tahoebmp.org](http://www.tahoebmp.org). At a site evaluation, a staff member will help the business owner determine the most effective approach to address soil erosion and stormwater runoff from their sites.

Local businesses that adhere to a set of lake-friendly guidelines will be recognized with a window decal, and a listing in the "Lake-friendly Businesses of Lake Tahoe," a publication distributed by TRPA's Erosion Control Team. These businesses will show that they are doing their part, as we all must, to stop the water pollution that is steadily reducing Lake Tahoe's famed water clarity.

In recognition of the fact that "clean water is everyone's business," the TRPA Governing Board has proclaimed May 2005 as Clean Water Month for the Lake Tahoe Basin and encouraged all property owners to implement water-protecting BMPs.

- Watch for "The Enviro Report" in the Tahoe Daily Tribune each Wednesday, and tune in to KOLO-TV News Channel 8 Tuesdays at 5 p.m. to learn more. "The Lake Tahoe Report" is a collaborative effort of the Lake Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and the California State Water Resource Control Board. For more information, contact Heather Segale, UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, (530) 583-3279, or logon to [www.lteec.org](http://www.lteec.org).

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